

Father John J. Delli Carpini

In 1998, Fr. John J. Delli Carpini began writing homilies and speeches for Cardinal Bevilacqua. He also became a writer in the Cardinal's Communications Office, working for its director, Catherine Rossi, and helping to represent Archdiocese views during a time that sexually abusive priests were becoming a national scandal. He did so even though, as Cardinal Bevilacqua well knew, Fr. Delli Carpini had just a few months before admitted to molesting a 13-year-old boy from his first assignment at Saint Luke the Evangelist in Glenside. Cardinal Bevilacqua tried to conceal his association with Fr. Delli Carpini and also made sure that the priest kept quiet his authorship of the Cardinal's homilies and pronouncements. This arrangement continued until March 2002.

Before writing for Cardinal Bevilacqua, Fr. Delli Carpini taught at Roman Catholic High School and was a dean at Saint Charles Borromeo Seminary for 12 years. The molestation he admitted began in 1977 when the boy was an 8th-grader in Saint Luke's parish; it continued for seven years. When the victim informed the Archdiocese of his abuse in 1998, he also reported that he had seen Fr. Delli Carpini in the act of molesting a 15-year-old, and had walked in on the priest as he appeared to be preparing to abuse an 8-year-old boy.

Cardinal Bevilacqua permitted Fr. Delli Carpini to continue in ministry anyway, and to live in a parish rectory. He did so after receiving a psychological evaluation reporting "a sexual disorder and a severe personality disorder." Attempting to justify these decisions to the Grand Jury, the Cardinal testified that he generally relied on the advice of therapists to decide whether a priest guilty of abuse should be given an assignment. The documents in Fr. Delli Carpini's file, however, show that it was Cardinal Bevilacqua who made the initial determination to keep him in ministry. The therapists, who worked for the Archdiocese, then tailored the priest's treatment to fit the Cardinal's decision.

Father Delli Carpini sexually abuses a 13-year-old boy at Saint Luke the Evangelist Church in Glenside.

Thirteen-year-old "Cliff" met Fr. John Delli Carpini shortly after the priest had been ordained in 1976, and when he began his career as an associate pastor at Saint Luke parish. Within six months, the priest had befriended the boy's family and hired him to work in the rectory. Around the same time, the priest began to invite Cliff on trips. He also began to molest the boy.

In March 1998, Cliff described the molestation to Secretary for Clergy William J. Lynn and his assistant, Fr. Gerald C. Mesure. Father Delli Carpini, Cliff recalled, fondled the boy's genitals. This happened sometimes when he was dressed, but also in underwear.

Father Delli Carpini also tried to get the boy to touch the priest's genitals. The abuse continued for seven years.

When Cliff came to the Archdiocese headquarters to report his abuse to officials, he was 34 years old. He was suffering severe emotional problems, which he attributed to Fr. Delli Carpini's abuse. He told Msgr. Lynn and Fr. Measure that "for many years he felt a great deal of guilt." He explained that he felt trapped and unable to escape the relationship because of the priest's friendship with his whole family. Even after the abuse ended, he often encountered Fr. Delli Carpini when the priest performed weddings and baptisms for members of Cliff's extended family.

Cliff said that his condition became worse in October 1997 as a result of seeing Fr. Delli Carpini. In that month, after living for years in Seattle, he visited Philadelphia for his brother's wedding at which Fr. Delli Carpini officiated. Monsignor Lynn and Fr. Measure recorded that, following this event, he used drugs for several months "to escape his emotional pain." He said he considered suicide. After the wedding he told his parents of his abuse at the hands of their priest friend. They went into counseling. He confronted Fr. Delli Carpini, and the priest admitted his wrongdoing and promised to seek help.

On March 13, 1998, Msgr. Lynn informed Cardinal Bevilacqua of Cliff's allegations. He told the Cardinal that Fr. Delli Carpini in an interview had admitted the crime to Archdiocese managers.

Father Delli Carpini's evaluation and treatment are hampered because he minimizes the number of his abuse victims.

Because Fr. Delli Carpini readily admitted his long-term abuse of Cliff, he was sent to the Archdiocese's hospital, Saint John Vianney, for evaluation. On April 4, 1998, Msgr. Lynn reported to Cardinal Bevilacqua that therapists at Saint John Vianney had diagnosed Fr. Delli Carpini with "a sexual disorder and a severe personality disorder." Monsignor Lynn wrote that "[n]o exact label was able to be placed on the sexual disorder at this time." Cardinal Bevilacqua approved the therapists' recommendation that the priest receive inpatient treatment for his disorders.

On May 27, 1998, Cliff returned to Msgr. Lynn's office to find out what action the Archdiocese had taken in response to his complaint. Monsignor Lynn told him that Fr. Delli Carpini was undergoing treatment, that the priest had not been diagnosed as a pedophile, and that he was denying that he had ever abused anyone other than Cliff. Cliff informed the Secretary for Clergy that he had witnessed two incidents that contradicted the priest's claim. Both involved Cliff's relatives.

Cliff told Msgr. Lynn that on one occasion, while on a trip with the priest, he had walked into a room "to find Father Delli Carpini with his pants unbuckled and his hands touching a fifteen (or sixteen)-year-old's lap." Another time he walked in on the priest alone in a room with an 8-year-old, also a relative of Cliff's. Knowing Fr. Delli Carpini's methods first-hand, he said that it looked as if the priest were preparing to molest the boy. Cliff recalled that, when he entered the room, Fr. Delli Carpini "appeared shocked and the boy ran out of the room." Monsignor Lynn did not ask the identity of the teenager or the 8-year-old.

At his meeting with Cliff, Msgr. Lynn promised that he would "make sure that Father Delli Carpini is confronted with [the allegation concerning the other two boys]." However, Msgr. Lynn's notes from his next meeting, on June 26, 1998, with Fr. Delli Carpini and his Saint John Vianney treatment team made no mention of any such confrontation. There is no indication that the therapists were ever informed of the other allegations, even though their initial reluctance to diagnose Fr. Delli Carpini with a specific disorder – for example, pedophilia or ephebophilia – may have been predicated on their belief that there was only one alleged victim. Monsignor Lynn appears not to have corrected this critical misperception.

The Archdiocese tells Vianney that it plans to return Father Delli Carpini to ministry.

On June 23, 1998, nearly three months before Saint John Vianney found Fr. Delli Carpini ready for discharge, Cardinal Bevilacqua approved a recommendation by Msgr. Lynn that the admitted molester be permitted to continue in a "limited" ministry. Although the recommendation purported to depend upon the outcome of the priest's treatment, Msgr. Lynn's memo to the Cardinal indicated that Cardinal Bevilacqua's decision came first. The

course of treatment was then tailored to the Cardinal's determination to permit Fr. Delli Carpini's return to ministry. Monsignor Lynn wrote:

One of the issues which must be dealt with in therapy is whether or not he will be permitted active ministry again. If a priest is not going to be permitted to return to ministry, they deal with the loss of ministry in the course of therapy and all the psychological ramifications that brings. If he is going to return to some form of ministry, the treatment is geared in that direction. At this stage in the treatment program, it is important to address this issue.

To assist the Cardinal in making a decision, Msgr. Lynn attached a March 30, 1998, psychological report from Saint John Vianney's original two-week evaluation. This was the evaluation that, as summarized by Msgr. Lynn in an April 1998 memo to the Cardinal, "showed a sexual disorder and a severe personality disorder." It did not endorse or recommend a return to ministry. The evaluation was also conducted before Cliff informed Msgr. Lynn of the incidents he witnessed involving his 8- and 15-year-old relatives. Nevertheless, based on this evaluation, Cardinal Bevilacqua decided to allow Fr. Delli Carpini to continue in ministry.

After Msgr. Lynn communicated Cardinal Bevilacqua's decision to the doctors at Saint John Vianney, the Secretary for Clergy wrote: "the treatment team was happy to have this information so they know how to direct their treatment with Father Delli Carpini." The order of events in this case belies Cardinal Bevilacqua's claim that he relied on the advice of professionals to determine whether a priest should return to ministry.

The Archdiocese gives Father Delli Carpini a position of honor writing speeches and sermons for the Cardinal.

On September 28, 1998, following Fr. Delli Carpini's discharge from Saint John Vianney, Cardinal Bevilacqua appointed the priest to the part-time job of Chaplain at Saint Cabrini Home, a retirement residence for the Cabrini Sisters. In addition, he was assigned to work part-time in the Archdiocese headquarters.

From 1998 until 2000, although ostensibly supervised by Chancellor Alexander J. Palmieri, Fr. Delli Carpini did a great deal of writing for Catherine Rossi, the director of

the Office of Communications, and wrote many homilies and talks for the Cardinal himself. On March 21, 2000, Vicar for Administration Joseph R. Cistone proposed in a memo to the Cardinal that Fr. Delli Carpini be assigned on a more full-time basis as a writer for the Office of Communications and for the Cardinal, but that this assignment be concealed from the public by keeping him under Chancellor Palmieri's supervision "for purposes of his 'personal' issues." Monsignor Cistone then added parenthetically: "(Regarding your previous concern about his mentioning that he writes for you, we were able to address this matter with Father Delli Carpini discreetly, without any reference to your having raised the issue.)" (Appendix D-26)

Father Delli Carpini remained in these assignments until February 2002, when Cardinal Bevilacqua removed him from ministry along with several other priests. All had been known for many years to have sexually abused minors. He is currently on administrative leave, prohibited from exercising his faculties except to celebrate Mass alone.

Father Delli Carpini appeared before the Grand Jury and was given an opportunity to answer questions concerning the allegations against him. He chose not to do so.